

Cable TV pirates get amnesty for turning in illegal boxes

By RAY KELLY

About 40 confessed cable TV pirates have turned in illegal con-

Lamirande, Continental's security manager, said yesterday.

Continental serves 140,000 sub-

"So far, the Enfield system has been overwhelmed by people turning in boxes... between 30 and 40 boxes on the first two days," he

um channels without charge, he said.

Six Hampden County viewers, including four people from the

pirates have yet stepped forward.

Continental will continue its amnesty program until April 16

nue last year because of signal theft

In the past, when Continental has caught cable TV pirates

Local/Regional

Continental Cable TV pirates offered amnesty

Cable television pirates are being offered a special amnesty through April 16 if they are willing to admit their wrong-doing and turn in any tampered equipment.

"Our objective is to provide a one-time opportunity for anyone with illegal or tampered equipment to turn in that equipment without penalty," said Geoff Little, vice president and district manager for Continental Cablevision.

Locally, the company serves Bernardston, Northfield, Conway, Deerfield, Sunderland and Whately.

The "no questions asked" amnes-

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Opinion

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Saturday, February 27, 1993

Cable 'pirates' can come clean

Theft is immoral, illegal and expensive. It's just plain wrong, and most people who steal know it is. Cable thieves who want a clear conscience are being offered that opportunity starting Monday.

Continental Cablevision is offering amnesty to cable TV pirates who turn in illegal convertor boxes or report unauthorized outlets through April 16. Cablevision decided to allow pirates to come clean after receiving several anonymous calls from pirates wishing to do so, but who feared punishment.

Under federal law, a cable piracy conviction carries a jail sentence or fines up to \$10,000. After the amnesty period ends, Continental plans to resume its aggressive pursuit and prosecution of pirates. A recent sting operation in the region napped 140 suspects.

We urge all those in illegal possession of equipment or hookups to do the right thing before it's too late.

Enfield cable TV company offers amnesty for pirates

By AnnMarie Cardaropoli
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

ENFIELD — Continental Cablevision is offering those who are pirating cable services an opportunity to turn in illegal converter boxes without the fear of restitution or prosecution, company officials said Thursday.

Cable pirates will have the chance to exchange their equipment in a "no questions asked" amnesty program between March 1 and April 16, according to Geoff Little, vice president and district manager for Continental.

"Our objective is to provide a one-time opportunity for anyone with illegal or tampered equipment to turn in that equipment without penalty," Little said.

John Lamirande, security manager for the cable company, said the amnesty program is in response to calls from owners of illegal equipment who read recent newspaper articles concerning how pirate boxes could be identified by illegal means.

"That's what sparked the campaign,"

he said.

The subject garnered publicity after an announcement earlier this month by Continental that it captured 140 viewers using illegal boxes during a recent pay-per-view boxing match by luring them into an elaborately laid trap.

The television bandits were watching November's Evander Holyfield vs Riddick Bowe boxing match when, during a commercial break, they were offered a free T-shirt commemorating the fight.

What they didn't know was that viewers with authorized boxes saw an entirely different commercial. Letters subsequently went out to those who ordered the shirts saying they had five days to tell the company where they got the boxes from or to send a check for \$2,000.

However, the amnesty program will allow pirates to turn in the boxes without fear of paying restitution to the company, Lamirande said Thursday.

Many residents called the company after the articles to see how they could turn in the boxes, he said.

"The callers want to come clean, but

they also want some assurance that they will not be fined when they turn in their equipment," Lamirande added.

The program will also cover other aspects of cable theft including those who have illegal hookups or extra outlets, he said.

"The program will not help those who have already been caught, but it may help others avoid legal expenses and the associated embarrassment," Lamirande added.

Those with illegal boxes can drop them off, and will not be charged for any damage to the tampered boxes or for services they may have obtained with the illegal devices, he said.

Continental plans to alert cable viewers to its amnesty offer through a multimedia advertising campaign which will begin in March.

Continental is the nation's third largest cable operator, serving 2.9 million customers in 700 communities across the country. Continental serves more than 140,000 customers in 33 western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut communities.

Ex-employee gets probation in cable TV theft

By AnnMarie Cardaropoli
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

ENFIELD — A former employee of Continental Cablevision who stole cable boxes and services from the company was placed on probation for one year and ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution in Superior Court Thursday.

William Mothes, 26, of 12 Guild St., pleaded guilty to a charge of fourth-degree larceny, a Class A misdemeanor punishable by a one-year prison term

four extra remote control units, police have said.

Mothes had paid for two boxes in his home, however, one of the boxes did not belong to him, authorities said.

A co-defendant in the case, Christopher Orr, 25, of New King St., was granted a special form of probation in Superior Court last month on a charge of third-degree larceny.

Judge Allen Smith granted the accelerated rehabilitation application submitted by Orr and placed him on

ordered to pay \$4,000 in restitution.

If Orr successfully completes the probationary term, all record of his arrest will be erased.

Orr and Mothes were employed as field service technicians who were responsible for installations and repairs.

Continental officials opposed Orr's application during a hearing in October, saying they wanted some \$5,000 in restitution as well as the names and addresses of the recipients of the 14 cable boxes Orr stole from the com-

CONNECTICUT

Cable TV amnesty offer brings in 80 violators

By EDMUND MANDER
and MATT BUCKLER

Journal Inquirer Staff Writers

ENFIELD — A certain local thief has been receiving a disturb-

ing message on his television set lately.

"We know you're stealing cable," the message reads, and it advises him to turn himself in before April 16, or face prosecution.

This particular viewer says he does not know what to do, but many others illegally hooked up to cable in northern Connecticut already have made up their minds.

More cable bandits in the Enfield system — which includes Enfield, East Windsor, Suffield, Somers, Windsor Locks, and other northern Connecticut towns — have come forward than anywhere else in the service area since Continental Cablevision announced the March 1 opening of an amnesty for cable thieves, according to John Lamirande, the company's security manager.

Eighty illegal converter boxes, which allowed households in the Enfield area to receive television signals without paying, have been turned in, he said Friday.

Does that mean Connecticut residents are more predisposed toward cable piracy than their counterparts in Massachusetts, who also are served by Continental Cablevision?

Not at all, said Lamirande, who opined that area residents might simply be more sensitive to the risks of cable theft following last month's sting, in which 140 Enfield system viewers were tricked into exposing their use of illegal equipment.

The company transmitted an offer for a free T-shirt that was picked up only by unauthorized control boxes during November's pay-television broadcast of the Evander Holyfield vs. Riddock Bowe boxing match. People with regular boxes saw a bona fide advertisement.

After responding to the offer — and obtaining their T-shirts — the viewers received a bill for \$2,000 in the mail. Pay up, or provide information on who supplied them their illegal equipment, the company ordered.

But people confessing between now and April 16 will neither have to pay nor snitch, Lamirande said. However, that has raised a dilemma for at least one viewer.

"If they know I'm stealing, I'll turn myself in, but if they're simply trying to con me, I'm not going to call in," said the local cable thief referred to above, who requested his name not be used.

"Now's the time to turn himself in," advised Lamirande, adding that the company does have the technology to detect the use of illegal equipment.

Control boxes not only receive signals but also transmit them back to the cable company, betraying each unit's unique electronic "fingerprint," according to Brian Fenton, editor of Popular Electronics magazine in New York. That enables the company to distinguish between legitimate and pirate equipment, and even tells it who is watching what channel, Fenton said.

Some pirates considering turning over a new leaf have been getting their lawyers to call the cable company first, just to make sure this is not a nasty trap that will land them in criminal or civil court, said Lamirande, estimating that about 5 percent of those hooked up to Continental are stealing. But he stressed that action will not be taken against those 'fessing up by April 16.

The amnesty not only extends to people using illegal boxes but also to anyone who has illegally hooked up to a neighbor's line or has connected more than one television to his cable without informing the company.

People are supposed to pay an additional fee if they have more than one set attached to their cable, Lamirande explained.

But after the deadline, all bets are off. People caught stealing cable will be given the choice to pay up and/or provide information on who supplied the decoder, or face prosecution, which can result in fines of up to \$10,000 and imprisonment.

Cable amnesty allows 'pirates' to come clean

By RAY KELLY

Continental Cablevision announced yesterday it will offer amnesty to cable TV pirates who turn in illegal converter boxes or report unauthorized outlets between March 1 and April 16.

"We won't prosecute or seek damages. There will be no 'back billing' either," said John Lamirande, Continental's security manager. "We just want them to stop stealing from us."

Continental serves 140,000 subscribers in Springfield, Northampton, Westfield, Agawam, Holyoke, South Hadley and 28 surrounding communities in Western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut.

The National Cable TV Association estimated cable companies lost \$4.5 billion in revenue in 1992 because of signal theft.

Continental plans to trumpet its amnesty offer during a multimedia blitz in March, Lamirande said.

After the amnesty period expires April 16, Continental will resume aggressive prosecution of cable TV pirates, Lamirande said.

He noted that an Agawam man pleaded guilty yesterday to a felony count of telecommunications fraud after Continental discovered he had twice climbed a utility pole last year and illegally wired his home.

Sentencing or a fine is pending, Lamirande said.

Under federal law, a convicted

cable TV pirate can be ordered to serve time in jail or pay a fine up to \$10,000.

The amnesty program was offered after callers, identifying themselves as pirates, said they wanted "to come clean, but..." also wanted some assurance that they will not be fined when they turn in their equipment," Lamirande said.

Most were worried by newspaper articles about a recent sting operation launched by Continental, he said.

During a Nov. 13 pay-per-view boxing match, Continental was able to broadcast a free souvenir T-shirt offer that was visible only to those using unauthorized converter boxes. After the offer was aired, 140 suspected cable TV pirates sent in for the T-shirts and incriminated themselves.

Most cable TV pirates have illegally obtained service by tapping into another subscriber's wire, purchasing an unauthorized converter box that was rigged to receive premium channels or tampering with a Continental-supplied converter, Lamirande said.

When Continental has nabbed pirates, it has given them an opportunity to become legitimate subscribers, inform on other pirates or make a cash settlement of up to \$5,000.

Pirates seeking amnesty by April 16 will not be required to become legitimate Continental subscribers or buy additional services, Lamirande said.

CATV piracy war getting down, dirty

Sophisticated traps, electronic 'bullets' nail unsuspecting thieves

By EDMUND MANDER
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

Neither side in the electronic war between cable television companies and the pirates selling illegal hook-ups is willing to discuss tactics, but it is a battle of wits, espionage, and even "bullets".

Continental Cablevision gleefully announced this week the "capture" of 140 viewers using illegal cable boxes during a recent pay-per-view boxing match, after luring them into an elaborately laid trap.

The television bandits were watching November's Evander Holyfield vs. Riddock Bowe boxing match when, during a commercial break, they were offered a free T-shirt commemorating the fight. Little did they know that viewers with authorized boxes saw an entirely different commercial.

Now the cable thieves are discovering that the T-shirts, which duly arrived, were anything but free. Letters have gone out asking them to respond within five days, either with a check for \$2,000 or an offer to tell Continental Cablevision from whom they obtained their decoders.

How was it done? "We don't go into detail on that," said John Lamirande, Continental Cable's security manager. After all, the enemy is still watching.

Neither would a handful of vendors advertising de-scramblers in the back of electronics magazines talk when asked by a reporter last week about tactics in the cable wars.

"The cable companies are closemouthed to say the least," said Brian Fenton, editor of Popular Electronics magazine, while those peddling the illegal gear are becoming increasingly fearful of lawsuits from legitimate

cable box manufacturers.

But here is how the sting worked.

Cable television companies transmit scrambled signals over the wire which are then de-scrambled into sound and pictures by the control boxes they provide customers.

Sending out a sting

The problem is that unauthorized boxes also can unscramble the programs. All the thief needs is to pay for basic cable service, after which, with the right equipment, he can descramble premium channels without paying a cent more.

However, cable companies have a lot more control over the boxes than they are willing to admit, and can detect the use of an illegal box without leaving their studio.

Each legal cable box has its own unique identity contained on microchips inside, while manufacturers of illegal units usually

give their products a uniform electronic "fingerprint." But unique or not, all these boxes send signals back to the company betraying their type, Fenton said.

"They know if your box is entitled because there's a two-way communication going on," he explained. The same technology also likely allows the companies to monitor who is watching what, although they are reluctant to admit that too, Fenton added.

Not only can cable television companies now identify individual boxes, they can send electronic commands that, for instance, will make units of a given type switch channels. That, after all, is how they can provide individual customers with specific pay-per-view channels from the studio.

So when Continental Cablevision got wind of a certain type of illegal decoder in use in its area, it sent out a signal that secretly put authorized units on one channel, and the pirate devices on another. Consequently certain people got to see a commercial for a T-shirt.

Shooting off electronic 'bullets'

Cable television companies also have used the so-called electronic "bullet" to shoot down program thieves, sending out an impulse that tuned certain illegal boxes to a blank channel.

One such shot fired by American Cablevision of Queens, N.Y., netted hundreds of pirates, all of whom called up the company to complain their television screens had gone blank, Fenton said. "People were stupid enough to complain."

But the arms race continues, and some box bandits are installing filters that allow their units to receive signals, but that prevent information going back to the company.

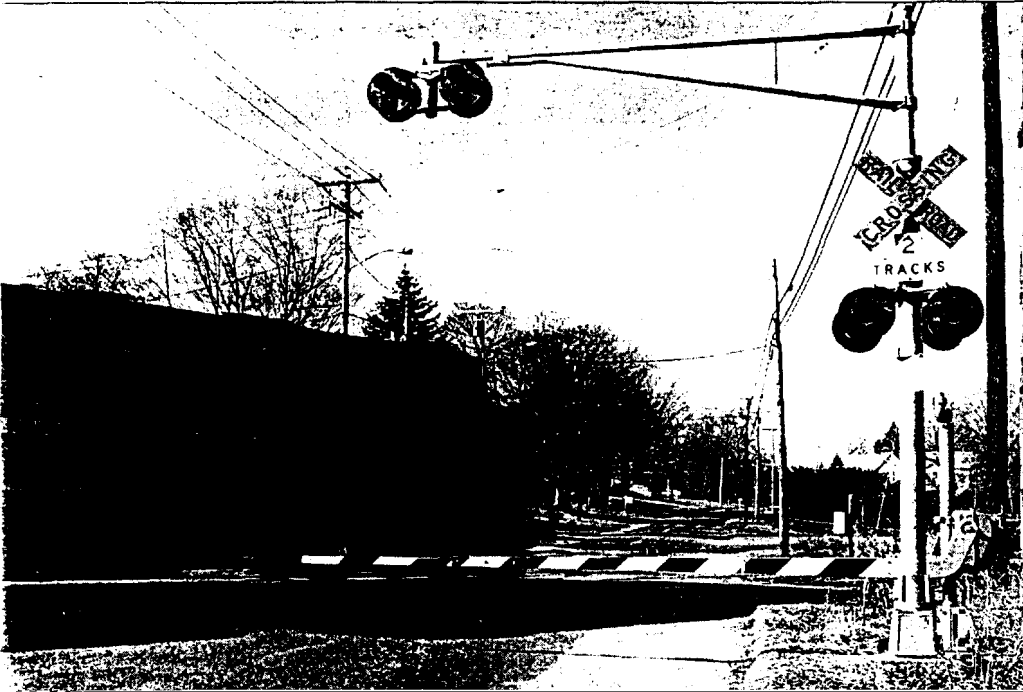
"We build a better mouse trap, and every time we do it they come with a better mouse," Lamirande complained.

Meanwhile companies are developing more basic tactics.

"We're currently in the process of offering a reward program," said Tad Diesel, community affairs manager of TCI Cablevision in Farmington. More than 120 people have called in tips in the two weeks since the company began offering \$500 for information leading to conviction of cable thieves, he said.

Continental also invites people to turn in pirates, promising them confidentiality. "There's no better technology than the honest neighbor," Lamirande said.

Meanwhile the penalties for cable theft have gotten stiffer since last year's re-regu-



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EDITORIALS

One expensive T-shirt

OUR
TOWNS

Continental Cablevision has executed a sting worthy of Eliot Ness and his

come. Those customers were probably a fraction of the audience tuned illegally to the match, and that audience was probably a fraction of the view-

Cable TV pirates tripped up by toll-free line

By RAY KELLY

SPRINGFIELD — Ex-wives, ex-husbands, former friends and neighbors were among the more than 500 people who telephoned tips into a toll-free cable TV piracy hotline last year.

The hotline recently completed its first full year of service. It was credited for three-quarters of the 700 probes into signal theft in Western Massachusetts and northern Connecticut in 1992, John Lamirande, Continental Cablevision security manager, said yesterday.

"We've gotten some very good

leads from it," Lamirande said.

Former spouses, lovers, friends and neighbors were among those who clued Continental to the suspected thieves, he said.

The toll-free number is 1-800-432-4390.

Continental, which serves Springfield, Northampton, Westfield, Holyoke, Agawam, South Hadley and surrounding towns, has tracked down cable TV theft to both inner-city neighborhoods and the suburbs, Lamirande said.

Two suspected cable TV pirates face charges in court this month.

The first involves a Springfield man who attempted to sell a tampered converter box, Lamirande said.

The box had been rewired to receive premium channels, he said.

Tampered Continental converters appear to be a larger problem in Springfield than black-market units or tapping into cable lines, Lamirande said.

The second suspected pirate is an Agawam man, who reportedly climbed a utility pole, tapped into a cable TV line, and illegally wired his home to receive pro-

gramming, Lamirande said.

Both suspected pirates had been warned by Continental in the past, he said.

Under state law, they could face a maximum fine of \$15,000 and up to four years in jail.

Usually, Continental seeks out-of-court settlements of \$1,200 from residential pirates, Lamirande said.

The cable TV industry estimates it loses \$3 billion nationally in potential revenue from signal theft.

Cable TV sets its hooks for pirates

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER
Courant Staff Writer

Cable TV pirates beware. The technicians inside that cable TV van parked at the corner may be doing more than looking for the address of a customer.

They may be monitoring cable sig-

Cable TV industry using sophisticated arsenal to fight piracy

Continued from Page 1

ble company was able to broadcast the advertisement only on television stations equipped with illegal descramblers that enabled viewers to watch the fight for free.

The company used a computer program to send a signal that would not be picked up by customers using legitimate cable company equipment — those viewers saw either other commercials or the announcers talking between rounds of the fight. By studying the equipment used by pirates, the company was able to develop a signal that would be picked up only by that equipment. The T-shirt offer, broadcast Nov. 13 during the Evander Holyfield-Biddick Bowe fight, drew responses from 140 people. Last week, the cable company sent them letters demanding \$2,000 each. If the viewers don't pay or provide information about where they watched the fight, the company will file lawsuits against them in federal court, said Geoffrey Little, Continental's vice president and manager of the company's Western New England district.

But legal experts said the cable company needs more evidence to make a case than the viewers' responses to a free T-shirt offer.

"It's a neat way to start an investigation, but they need more evidence," said Ralph G. Elliot, a Hartford lawyer who specializes in First Amendment issues. "They can't prove their case just because somebody responded to an ad."

John Lamirande, the cable company's security manager, said Continental is gathering more evidence.

He would not elaborate on how the cable company is gathering the evidence, but industry officials said it is possible to tell if people are using illegal descrambler boxes without ever entering their homes.

Using a device called a time domain reflectometer, technicians can send a signal through the cable and into a home. After the signal reaches a television, it bounces back to the device, creating a printout that tells technicians what is on the other end.

They can tell how many televisions are connected to the line, whether the cable is run through a videocassette recorder, whether the cable box has been altered to broadcast more stations than authorized, and whether the viewer is using an illegal descrambler or converter.

"It makes a printout similar to a lie detector test," said Jodi Hooper, assistant director of the National Cable Television Association's office of cable signal theft. "When the lines

jump a certain way, we know we have a winner. There is no device that will give you a readout that says where all the descramblers are. But we can check individual lines."

Technicians in the field also look for obvious signs of theft, Hooper said. If several customers in an area all complain that some of their stations are fuzzy, it usually means that the signal is weak because of a leak in the cable system.

Leaks can often be caused by faulty equipment, which must be repaired because they can interfere with aviation and emergency communications, Hooper said. But sometimes the leaks are caused by sloppy homemade connections.

In Queens, N.Y., the cable company used sophisticated computer software to nab pirates in what one official called an "electronic countermeasure."

American Cablevision of Queens sent a computerized signal throughout its system in April 1991 that disabled cable boxes that had been tampered with. The signal, which did not harm legitimate customers' cable boxes, attached itself to computer chips in illegal boxes that enabled viewers to see unauthorized channels.

When technicians responded to customers' complaints that their ca-

ble was out, they found the tampered boxes and the company filed federal lawsuits.

Of the 317 people sued, all but three have settled with the cable company for damages ranging from \$500 to \$2,250, said Daniel J. Lefkowitz, a Long Island attorney for Time Warner Cable of New York City, which runs the Queens system.

The other three cases are awaiting trial, Lefkowitz said.

"Some of these people had three boxes in their house," Lefkowitz said. "We thought that was greedy."

But most people don't steal cable because they are greedy, industry officials said. They steal it because it's there, in their house, and they don't really feel like they are stealing anything.

"They're already used to getting the broadcast signal for free, so cable is just an extension of that," said Steel of the New England Cable Television Association. "People's perception is, who are they hurting?"

The back pages of some electronics magazines are filled with advertisements for cable converters and descramblers that play on those feelings. For \$100 to \$300, customers can buy descramblers that enable them to watch every channel offered by a cable company — including the

pay-per-view ones — while only paying \$20 or so a month for basic service.

Officials at three of the companies selling the descramblers refused to comment, and officials at five others did not return telephone calls. Despite disclaimers in some of the advertisements telling customers that they must comply with state and federal laws, the ads clearly promote using the devices to obtain free cable service.

"Is your cable company alienating you?" asks one advertisement that features a picture of a Martian holding a TV remote control. "Say NO to unearthly rental fees."

But some cable companies, in their fight to catch the pirates, have been able to play on another human feeling: the feeling that it isn't fair for some people to get free service while others have to pay.

West Hartford-based TCI Cablevision started a program in late January offering residents \$500 for information about people who sell equipment or hook up others for free cable service.

More than 120 people have already called TCI to report cable theft, said Deb Arsenault, the company's security coordinator.

"We've got a number of leads that we're working on," Arsenault said. "We get a lot of people who have cable and think it's not fair that the guy down the street is not paying for it."

Selling descramblers and converters can result in federal fines of as much as \$25,000, and stealing service can result in fines as high as \$10,000.

But cable companies must catch the thieves themselves, and file civil lawsuits against them in federal court.

"It's the cable company's responsibility to make sure that people are paying for their services," said Ronald Parver, chief of the cable TV branch of the Federal Communications Commission, which regulates the cable industry. "They have to do the police work."

It is against federal law to sell devices used to steal cable services and it is against federal law to use them. But in Connecticut and 17 other states, it is not illegal to own them.

"We've been pushing the legislature in Connecticut for several years to outlaw the things," Arsenault said. "It's just like going into Macy's and shoplifting. It's stealing."

TOYS

Kiddie Correct

Are toymakers studying Clinton policy papers? Many of this year's new playthings reflect concerns for the

environment, gender barriers and racial



EXCURSIONS

Montana: Celebs on the Range

The Big Sky has always been full of stars—lately, more and more of the Hollywood variety. Everyone from Brooke Shields to Whoopi Goldberg gets to play rancher (if only a few like Mel Gibson—raising cattle—and Ted Turner and Jane Fonda—buffalo—take it seriously). Where else can a Meg Ryan or a Charlie Sheen sip Budweiser one night, and Evening in Missoula, a local herbal tea, the next? Lunch on trout at the Gallatin Gateway Inn

STINGS

A Technical Knockout

Big Brother isn't watching, but Continental Cablevision is. During last November's pay-per-view Holyfield-Bowe heavyweight title bout, the Springfield, Mass. cable TV co.

MULTICHANNEL NEWS
FEB 2 1993

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Using a T-shirt promotion, **Continental Cablevision** nabbed over 140 people illegally watching last November's Evander Holyfield-Riddick Bowe pay-per-view fight. Viewers of the fight who responded to a free T-shirt offer seen only through illegal decoders could have to pay settlements ranging up to \$1,200 for residential theft and \$5,000 for commercial theft, Continental said.

Bond at \$10,000 in cable box theft

By AnnMarie Cardaropoli
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

ENFIELD — Supervision by an Alternative Incarceration Center and bonds totaling \$10,000 were ordered in Superior Court Wednesday for a local youth who police say was involved in the theft of several cable boxes last summer from vans belonging to Continental Cablevision.

Jason R. Malin, 19, of 29 Sandpiper Rd., was presented before Judge Terence A. Sullivan on two counts each of third-degree burglary, conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, sixth-degree larceny, conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny, third-degree criminal mischief, and conspiracy to commit third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

Sullivan ordered Malin to abide by all conditions of the AIC

operated by the Community Renewal Team on Moody Road and warned him that failure to do so would jeopardize his release on that bond.

Malin and two other youths, identified by authorities as Rodney Lynch, of 83 Town Farm Rd., and Steve Domato, now of St. Petersburg, Fla., broke into the vans on more than one occasion from July to September 1991 after learning the locations of the vans from a former employee of the company, according to an affidavit supporting Malin's arrest.

Police said a girlfriend of one of the teen-agers told them that the trio told her they were going to break into a van on Sept. 26, 1991, at 20 High Meadow Lane. They came back about five hours later with six cable boxes and remote control units, paint brushes and a metal tool box, according to the court documents.

Malin told police that he acted as a lookout in that break. The girlfriend also told police that the youths said they were getting inside information from Chris Orr, who at that time was an employee of the company.

Orr, 25, of 32 New King St., was arrested by warrant last week on a charge of third-degree larceny by possession.

Also arrested in the case last week was William Mothes, 26, of 12 Guild St., a former cable employee who was charged with second-degree larceny, sixth-degree larceny by possession, and third-degree criminal mischief.

Mothes was released on a \$3,000 bond while Orr was released on a \$1,000 bond. Both are scheduled to appear in Superior Court on August 18, police said.

Police said Orr, turned in about 14 cable boxes, worth over \$1,300, that he was charged with stealing over a two-year period from 1989 to 1991.

Police said Mothes was arrested for stealing cable services for at least two months.

JOURNAL INQUIRER / THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1992

Teen charged in van burglary

By Journal Inquirer Staff

ENFIELD — A local teen-ager who police say broke into a van belonging to Continental Cablevision last September and stole \$1,400 worth of items, was arrested Tuesday.

Jason R. Malin, 19, of 29 Sandpiper Road, was charged with third-degree burglary, conspiracy to commit third-degree burglary, sixth-degree larceny, conspiracy to commit sixth-degree larceny, third-degree criminal mischief, and conspiracy to commit third-degree criminal mischief, police said.

Malin, and at least two other companions, broke into the van as it was parked at 20 Highmeadow Lane on September 26, 1991, police said.

Taken in the break-in were a 15-inch color television and a signal meter, police said.

Malin was being held on a \$2,500 bond pending an appearance today in Superior Court.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12, 1992 / JOURNAL INQUIRER

Ruling on probation request delayed in CATV theft case

By ANNMARIE CARDAROPOLI
Journal Inquirer Staff Writer

ENFIELD — A Superior Court judge postponed a decision Thursday on a local man's application for a special form of probation on charges that he stole cable boxes from Continental Cablevision over a two-year period.

Judge Allen Smith continued the case until Nov. 17 after nearly rejecting the application of Christopher Orr, 25, of 32 New King St.

Orr, a former Continental employee, was arrested in August on a single count of third-degree larceny.

Smith told Orr's attorney, Albert Harper of Hartford, that his client should be prepared to pay the company restitution and to turn over the names and addresses of the recipients of the 14 boxes he stole from the company.

"He'll have to come up with a large chunk of cash and I'm sure he doesn't have that," the judge said.

Accelerated rehabilitation is reserved for adults with no criminal record. All record of the arrest is erased upon successful completion of a period of probation set by the judge.

Authorities have said Orr turned in 14 boxes, worth about \$1,700, that he stole from the company between 1989 and 1991.

The arrest of Orr and another employee, William Mothes, 26, of 12 Guild St., followed an extensive investigation by local police and private investigators hired by Continental that began over a year ago.

Mothes, who was charged with second-

degree larceny, sixth-degree larceny by possession, and third-degree criminal mischief, is slated to return to court on Nov. 19.

Orr and Mothes were employed as field service technicians who were responsible for installations and repairs.

Continental officials have declined to say whether the pair was fired or resigned.

Continental Security Manager John Lamirande appeared in court Thursday to protest Orr's application for the probationary program.

Lamirande said the company lost about \$2,700 per box, per month, on services that residents were receiving with the boxes that were rigged by Mothes to receive every channel including those that cost extra.

He reminded the judge that Orr refused to provide the company with the names and addresses of those he gave the boxes to.

However, Harper argued that his client's actions represented an "incredible misjudgment" on his behalf.

"He made a very bad mistake," Harper added.

In addition to losing his job with the company, which he held for 4½ years, Orr has since suffered "great financial difficulties," Harper said.

Harper said he submitted a large number of character references for Orr which show that he is not likely to offend again in the future, a criteria that must be found in order for the application to be approved.

When it appeared that the judge was going to reject the application, Harper asked that he do so without prejudice so that Orr could reapply for the program, a request Smith did not want to go along with.

"I don't think it's fair," Smith said.

Stafford school enrollments still climbing

By Journal Inquirer Staff

STAFFORD — Twenty-four additional students have enrolled in town schools since school began, a total of 40 more than last year, according to school officials.

Enrollment at the six schools is now at 1,864.

Superintendent of Schools Wayne Senecal

presented updated enrollment figures for the 1992-93 school year, as of Oct. 1, at the last Board of Education meeting.

In the primary grades, prekindergarten to Grade 5, there are 960 students or 15 more than last year.

In Grades 6 through 8, there are 438, an increase of 14. The high school, however, saw a decrease of five to 466 students, which includes 23 students from Union.

HARTFORD COURANT



**Enfield
news notes**

Cable TV firms crack down on illegal decoders, sellers

By BRAD SMITH

In a regional crackdown on cable theft, one of Greater Springfield's two pay-television firms said yesterday it will fire "electronic bullets" to disarm pirate devices used to steal premium channels.

"We're taking it upon ourselves

legal boxes may be in use in this area

In a demonstration at Continental's downtown Springfield studio, cable executives showed how they can send electronic signals to defeat illegal decoders. They also showed an array of confiscated boxes.

utives said. It adds to expenses that are passed on to consumers as price increases, they said.

The industry is fighting a perception among many that cable theft is not a crime, Little said.

"Too often, people think it's cute or fun," he said, citing crimes that range from adding an illegal decoder to the bedroom to



LA Daily News

Police seize unauthorized cable devices

*Sun Valley warehouse
among 6 sites raided*

**By Stephanie Brommer
and Beth Laski**
Daily News Staff Writers

SUN VALLEY — Police raided a Sun Valley warehouse and five other San Fernando Valley locations Monday, confiscating 50,000 unauthorized cable devices and decoders worth more than \$4.5 million.

No one was arrested in Monday's raid, which came after a smaller seizure in June and months of investigation into a suspected conspiracy to distribute and sell the black boxes, said LAPD Lt. Al Corella, with the burglary-auto theft division.

"This was a very lucrative and sophisticated operation," Corella said of the Sun Valley warehouse. "There's a lot of money tied up in this place."

Police said the warehouse, operating under different names, shipped the devices nationwide. Citing the investigation, police would not reveal Monday who operated the company or its current name.

Local cable operators hailed the

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Valley cable operators hail seizures

CABLE / From Page 1

often directed at people who make

Cable Boxes Are Seized in Massive Raid

■ **Sun Valley:** Police say the equipment, worth millions of dollars, is part of a fraud scheme.

By JOSH MEYER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Los Angeles police seized at least 40,000 cable television decoding boxes Monday from a Sun Valley warehouse and six other locations, saying they were for use in a massive conspiracy to defraud cable companies out of millions of dollars in fees.

The decoders found during a surprise raid at the warehouse and electronics laboratory in Sunland alone were worth more



ROLANDO OTERO / Los Angeles Times

L.A. police seized allegedly tampered-with decoding boxes.

than \$4.5 million on the market, said police Lt. Al Corella.

Once hooked up to TV cables and sets however, the decoder boxes could enable cable customers to watch millions of dollars' worth of pay channels such as Home Box Office and Showtime

for free, as well as increasingly popular pay-per-view concerts and sporting events, Corella said.

Corella and other investigators estimated that the boxes, if sold, would allow buyers to receive more than \$100 million worth of

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LOS ANGELES TIMES

VALLEY



Los Angeles Times

V A L L E Y Business

TUESDAY,
OCTOBER 6, 1992

Also Serving
Ventura County



To Catch a Cable Thief

■ **Television:** Bootleg hookups have cost local operators millions of dollars. They are hoping stronger enforcement will slow piracy.

By PATRICE APODACA
TIMES STAFF WRITER

It's a hot September day and the cable patrol is on the prowl, hunting down pirates who steal the signals that are the lifeblood of cable companies

annually in lost revenues and untold additional costs associated with tracking offenders, replacing damaged equipment and trying to prevent abuses.

Yet efforts to thwart cable piracy have fallen short. Hundreds of cases involving signal theft and the sale of illegal de-

